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ABSTRACT

Reading instruction for the middle school disabled reader must vary from the way it has been taught in the student's past. Experiences using theme reading, poetry, scavenger hunt instruction cards, newspapers, and trade materials which form complete thought units prevent the reading task from becoming the isolated skills instruction of the past. Motivation will only develop if the student is interested in the material and if the content is new and not a repeat of earlier training. Reading material should be at the student's instructional level. Teachers will also be motivated by new and innovative content and the interest students demonstrate. (Three figures demonstrating different teaching activities are included.) (RS)

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Iowa Reading Conference, 1990

WHOLE LANGUAGE FOR DISABLED READERS

Marie Carbo wrote an article on "Deprogramming Reading Failure" for the KAPPAN, in November 1987. She tells about Tom, a child that could not read. His reading decline was almost continuous from kindergarten until fourth grade. At age 7 he was given two labels. In remedial reading he had been taught phonics year after year. He learned the phonics but still could not read. In fourth grade his teacher used the Whole Language approach to reading. He left fourth grade reading at a second grade level; he had achieved 1.5 years of reading at that point.

Students that have a global learning style need to learn using whole materials. To them using the analytical parts method used in skill instruction is not successful. It can be very frustrating and actually cause a block in learning to read. Instead, these children need a literature and writing approach. Reading activities need to focus on meaning instead of isolated skills. The materials will vary depending on the student age and interest. The materials should always be interesting, fun, or/and content course related. If possible, the materials should be at the instructional and independent reading levels.

The middle school student with reading problems has usually been skilled ad nauseam. The approach has not worked, and the student has come to view reading as a failure activity to be avoided whenever possible. Plus, some students view reading as learning skills, not as an activity that provides pleasure or information. So where do we begin?

In the middle school, students can begin with interesting trade books or high/low books. Reading for the student can be for personal choice on any topic the student chooses. Skills will be taught as they are needed in the reading situation. The key to success is reading with comprehension. Combine this with Language Experience stories dictated or written by the student. Using both reading and writing serves a double purpose : 1) the child learns to think like an author and 2) the child is learning to use all areas of the Language Art program.

To achieve reading success, our first task is to find interesting material on many topics and reading levels. Next, we find material that interests the individual middle school student. Third, we begin to focus on content meaning rather than isolated skills and vocabulary. Finally, we let them help plan their own program.

To achieve these four steps, begin by reading to the students.

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At first, we read to show the student that reading is a fun and interesting task. We can then focus on the content of the material. This requires using the various levels of comprehension. Have students predict events from the title or subheadings and then evaluate the prediction. After this activity the students are ready to begin analyzing the type of writing being read. Is it narrative or expository materials? If it is expository the student needs to recognize that the text may be written in one of the following styles: 1) cause/effect, 2) sequence, 3) compare/ contrast, 4) time-ordered, or 5) problem solving. If the student can determine the type of material, it will aid in comprehension. The second step, in this process, is to have the student write a short paragraph using the organizational style just studied. Open-ended questions are used to help the student evaluate or create written paragraphs about the material covered. In the beginning, do not expect the writing to be too thorough. These students have been picking up bits and pieces of knowledge from class discussion and have read only small sections of their assigned content reading, thus not utilizing much of the subject substance. Due to this, your questions need to follow the material outline to develop reading skills that move from the beginning of the material to the end. The usage of context material also requires that the reading be done in sequential order. Do not always expect students to write or discuss their reading. They need to learn that sometimes reading is for pleasure and not for reports. This is especially important for students that have met failure in the regular classroom and have never experienced the joy of reading for pleasure. The third step, a highly motivational technique to use with remedial readers, is to have material on topics that interest the students. The students then self-select books of their choice. Students should predict events in their reading and then evaluate their predictions after reading the text. An effective way to do this is to have the student write the predictions in a journal and then revise these after reading the text. The fourth step is to have them plan their own program with you. You can use contracts to keep them on task. An example of this is John, a seventh grade boy who was in Chapter I; each day he would bring a difficult book on Astronomy to class. Each day the teacher would try to get him to work on skill sheets. John put up with her insistence on skill learning but would not do the sheets. Finally, the last five minutes of each session he was allowed to read his book with the teacher's assistance. The teacher laughed as she told this story, "I'm a slow learner," she said, "It took me six weeks to realize that I could teach John the skills as they were needed while reading the book of his choice." From that day on, reading was done using the students choice of material. The foundation skills that he had not mastered were taught as they applied to John's reading. This application made sense to John, so he was willing to learn the skills.

Theme teaching is one way to motivate the remedial reader. Choose a theme from a content subject or from current events. Here a topic is developed using the four Language Arts strands.

Figure 1 shows the Language Arts strands, as well as, including interdisciplinary material from the content subjects that relates to the topic of The San Francisco Earthquake of 1989. The various categories that might be used in reading include poetry, newspaper articles, locating reference materials on fault lines, the Richter Scale, and concentric ring pattern made by an earthquake.

The steps in using theme teaching in reading might be as follows:

1. Discuss the topic of earthquakes
   a. recent quakes around the world
   b. San Francisco Earthquake of 1989
2. Introduce a book on earthquakes
   ex. Gladys C. Hansen: DENIAL OF DISASTER, 1989,
   or high/low reading series on natural disasters
   ex. WIPED OUT by Gartler and Benditt, Phoenix Reading Series
3. Writing activity
   a. Journal of a rescue worker
   b. News broadcast of daily events (researched in 1989 newspapers)
4. Poetry search
   a. Natural disasters
   b. Earthquakes
5. Poetry -write Haiku
   shape poetry
   free verse
6. Listening-watch a film about earthquakes
7. Sequencing-make a time line of earthquakes in the United States since 1850
8. Penmanship-record meaningful quotes from your reading
9. History
   a. What details can you find about the 1906 earthquake.
   b. When was San Francisco founded
10. Debate current earthquake predictions
    ex. New Madrid quake prediction of December 2, 1990

Theme teaching can also be utilized in reading by planning a theme with your students. In some cases, a theme may be individualized to meet the needs of a few students, or it may be chosen from current content studies; social studies and science are areas that lend themselves well to theme teaching. What ever the motivation, it will be more carefully studied if the students have input into the selection and planning.

Other ways to promote reading can include a variety of activities. Scavenger hunts, for example, require reading for comprehension and are a fun way to reinforce reading vocabulary mastery. An example of this would be to place this sentence on

the scavenger hunt card, " Find the word ` evaporation' and look for your next direction card." The word evaporation is part of a science bulletin board. Near it, on the bulletin board, you have placed the next direction card. Since the word evaporation is a new science vocabulary word, the students must recognize the word to find the next card & directions.

Old flash cards can be used to make sentences or give directions. New vocabulary words can be written on blank cards that are then used in the sentence formation. Students that are working on alphabetizing might use these cards for a related activity.

Cloze reading passages encourage the word reader to comprehend larger segments of material. The blank word cannot be filled if word calling is the reading style. For remedial reading students utilizing material from previously read text as a beginning point helps provide success. Later, new unread material is utilized when students have become successful and no longer need familiar material.

Newspapers are great resources for teachers to use in the classroom. To combine reading and writing the students can write "for sale" ads. They can sell everything from favorite library books to rewriting ads in the local paper. Newspapers also provide an excellent resource when teaching fact/opinion or propaganda techniques. Students can read an editorial and look for verification of facts. Look for terms such as "I think", "I feel," or "I believe".

Older disabled readers can practice reading a trade book until it is mastered; then they can read the book to students at a lower grade level. This not only motivates reading the material correctly, but it gives the disabled reader success and positive reinforcement from younger students. These stories could then be rewritten by the Chapter I students so that students at the lower grade level can read the story themselves.

Reading and writing pattern books has proved successful for the student with reading problems. The pattern is repeated frequently and becomes easy reading for the slower reader. Then the student can write his/her own pattern book to share with other students.

Semantic mapping and clustering are good ways to develop reading vocabulary. The students can brainstorm about a topic and then map the material around the main heading. An example might be to use garden produce as the main idea. Using that motif you can categorize root vegetables, vine vegetables, ground fruit, and vine fruit (Figure 2). The students are then ready to learn outlining (Figure 3). When clustering, you help the student use new vocabulary terms by providing synonyms. An example might be providing synonyms for the term arid. Terms that children might better relate to could include dry, desert, or waterless.

Reading pattern books, such as Marcia Brown illustrated, THE

THREE BILLY GOATS GRUFF, can provide success for the student who has had problems reading. Provide copies of the story for the students. This can be done in chart form or as individual copies for each student. These are then read to the students, used as a choral reading, and finally read by individuals. Each student can then write his/her own pattern book to share with other students.

Poetry can help develop vocabulary. The material should first be read to the students. It can then be read by pairs of students or chorally. This aids in vocabulary development, fluent reading, and expression in oral reading. Echo reading can also be used with short poems. The teacher reads a verse, then the students reread the same verse. This continues until reading can proceed without the teacher's assistance. Finally, the reading is done on an individual basis.

Concrete poetry is fun to create and read. Students can be introduced to this poetry form by producing concrete poems for the bulletin board. The poetry forms the shape of the object being described. The poetry is then read by other students in the class. Wish poems or "If I Were" poems are good tools to motivate student writing. Cleerihews (KLER i hyoo), a four lines rhymed verse describing a person, can be used to describe a person in the trade book they are reading.

Write poems about The Civil War, music, weather, seasons, colored leaves, molecules or other topics being studied. An insightful and creative project is to have the student write from inside of a painting. One student wrote why Mona Lisa had that sly smile as she posed for her portrait.

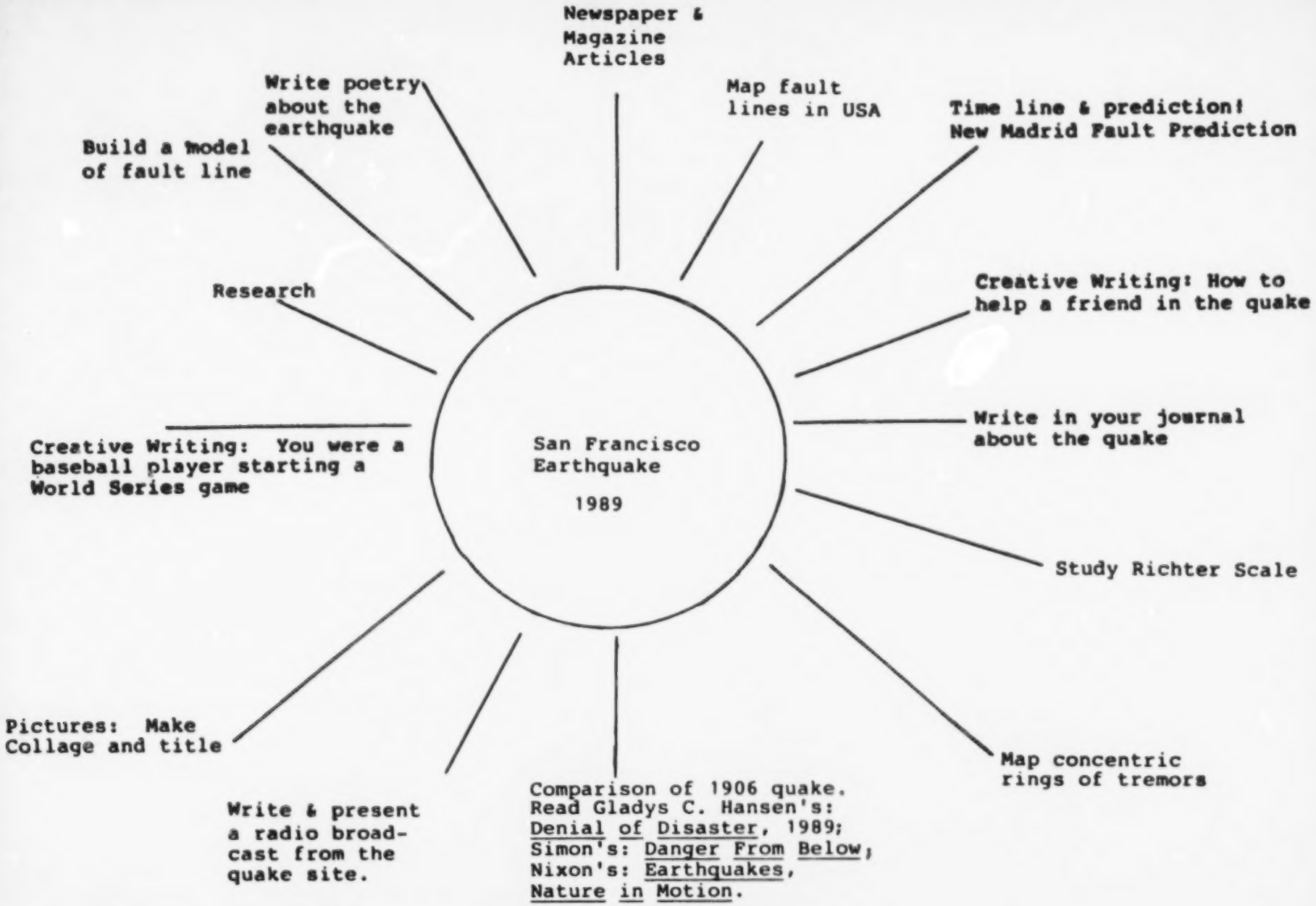
Haiku is a short, structured Japanese poetic form about nature or the seasons. It is fairly simple to write once the three line pattern is understood.

5 syllables
7 syllables
5 syllables

It is a form poem that is easy to teach; students feel less fearful of it due to the structure of the poem.

Use "Suspense" or "This Bridge" from A LIGHT IN THE ATTIC by Shel Silverstein. Both provide suspense without an ending; students can write an ending in either prose or poetry.

Poetry does not require lots of expensive materials. It can be used in choral reading or in echoic reading to help develop the student's reading vocabulary. Initially, it may be used in charts. Later, it can be used individually. Finally, it can be put into booklets for the individual students. In addition to its ease of usage it can develop meaningful vocabulary for the students. As they use the material over and over, the words become personal. Spelling list can be made from new words found in the poetry. The student must interpret poetry from personal life experiences. By doing this the student begins to feel the


Newspaper & Magazine Articles
Write poetry about the earthquake
Map fault lines in USA
Time line & prediction! New Madrid Fault Prediction
Build a model of fault line
Research
Creative Writing: How to help a friend in the quake
Creative Writing: You were a baseball player starting a World Series game
San Francisco Earthquake
1989
Write in your journal about the quake
Study Richter Scale
Pictures: Make Collage and title
Write & present a radio broadcast from the quake site.
Comparison of 1906 quake. Read Gladys C. Hansen's: Denial of Disaster, 1989; Simon's: Danger From Below; Nixon's: Earthquakes, Nature in Motion.
Map concentric rings of tremors

Marilyn Wikstrom : Figure 1

Figure 2: Garden Produce: Semantic Map

Garden Produce

I. Vegetables

A. Ground

1. Potatoes
2. Beets
3. Onions

B. Vine

1. Peas
2. Beans
3. Squash

II. Fruits

A. Ground

1. Strawberries
2. Cranberries

B. Vine

1. Raspberries
2. Blueberries

Figure 3: Outline - Garden Produce

emotional impact of the poem. The genre of the poetry can then be analyzed and shared with others through writing poetry in that form. Poetry has appeal to both boys and girls if it is adventuresome and not sentimental. The maturity level of the poetry is important. Myra Cohen Livingston's EARTH SONGS is an example of poetry that appears to be written for primary children, however, when you actually read the poems the vocabulary is for middle school students. Students can create humorous, scary, unfinished, mysterious, historical, or active poetry.

In conclusion, reading for the disabled reader must vary from the way it has been taught in the student's past. Experiences using theme reading, poetry, Scavenger hunts, newspapers, and other trade materials form complete thought units prevent reading task from becoming the isolated skills instruction of the past. Motivation will only develop if the student is interested in the material and if the content is new and not a repeat of earlier training. Reading should be at the student's instructional level. Materials at the frustration level have a place only if it is of special interest to the student. You, as the teacher, will also be motivated by new innovative content and the new interest the students demonstrate.

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